

Thulani Sishi, cofounder of Gamedock

By  Emily Stander

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Finding his competitive spirit with rugby in his younger days, Thulani Sishi has thrust his love for entertainment and esports into a successful career.



Image supplied: Thulani Sishi

In fact, he founded Gamedock - a specialised company that looks at content creation and brand collaboration within the esports space - to further the potential he saw in South African esports and competition.

We spoke with him to find out more about Gamedock, how he ended up here and some advice for young competitors looking to be successful...

Tell us a bit more about yourself?

I'm a huge fan of sport, competition and entertainment - which has been my fuel in the SA esports community for the past 20 years. Generally, I'm quite optimistic and upbeat; I am a people person and always do my best to put forth positive energy to those around me to bring out their magic.

You used to be a rugby player! How did you end up doing what you do now?

Indeed. I played rugby in primary school and high school, and eventually joined the Sharks Academy (Durban is home for me) following in my brother's footsteps. This is where I got my competitive drive from.

After a few years of casual gaming, my brother and my best friends started a *Counter Strike* (CS) team and with a bit of time became the best players in Durban and won all the tournaments in the region. We then decided to head to 'the big one in JHB' (being Rage) in 2008. That's where my eyes lit up and I realised gaming and esports was, and could be, bigger than I ever imagined.

A few years later (in 2014/2015), through hard work, I joined the best esports team in SA and became the number one team in the country and qualified for tournaments like ESWC in France and Canada and got the opportunity to compete against the best teams in the world - which is always the dream for any competitive gamer!



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■ Could you tell us a bit more about Gamedock?

Gamedock Entertainment is a branded content creation company within the gaming and esports space in SA. It provides brands with services that range from consulting for campaigns in the gaming and esports industry, production and broadcasting solutions within a gaming and esports context, brand campaigns and activations at live events, social media marketing/influencer campaigns within the gaming and esports space, as well as esports tournament organising and hosting.

■ What inspired the inception of Gamedock?

After 'retiring' from my competitive gaming career, my Gamedock business partners and I had a brainstorming session where we looked at what was being done in SA in comparison to the rest of the world in terms of esports tournaments, marketing and campaigns and events within gaming and esports - and there was very clearly a big opportunity for a company like Gamedock.

As former competitive gamers, we knew what we wanted from an events and campaigns perspective, how it needed to look and feel, and more importantly how to engage with the gaming audience.

■ Could you tell us about some of your most successful projects?

Predator Slam Series: We planned, hosted and broadcast the Predator Winter Slam and Predator Summer Slam series of *Counter Strike* tournaments that featured the best CS teams in South Africa that battled it out for their share of a generous cash prize pool. This campaign also included a strong brand profiling and social media element for the Predator brand.

LG Oled TV Fifa charity showmatch: We conceptualised and hosted a Fifa show match between two of South Africa's most prominent Fifa players - all for charity - in promotion of LG's new range of Oled TV screens. The show match was profiled through media outlets and social media, and the match itself live streamed via Twitch and YouTube from LG's headquarters in JHB which was loved by the community.



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■ ***What are you hoping to achieve with branding in the esports space?***

The ever-growing tech industry subsequently enhances the growth of the gaming and esports industry. Esports has a certain look and feel that appeals to the new generation and we are hoping to be a bridge that connects brands with gamers so they can be synonymous with its growth.

Brands have a big opportunity to tap into a very loyal and incredibly active audience and community - when they work with the right partners and conceptualise the right campaigns, executed in the right way. The gaming and esports space in SA is very young and fresh, which is a great opportunity for brands to experiment.

■ ***Why would you suggest that young people get involved in the esports industry?***

There are loads of benefits when it comes to gaming and esports:

- Teamwork
- Hand-eye coordination and reaction speed
- Stimulates creativity, focus and visual memory
- Critical thinking
- Communication

There are many more than those listed above but the consensus is that esports is another avenue for personal development much like rugby and other sports. There are also a lot of different career opportunities in gaming and esports such as game design, PR and marketing within the industry, journalism, coaching and management and so much more.

It's no secret that South Africa has a lot of social and economic issues and I know esports can ease that burden by keeping kids safe indoors and giving them hope for a better future.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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